

Facilitating Practice

Break into groups of 3-4 and take turns responding to each scenario. These scenarios might take place in, or outside of meeting

1. In your hospitality house, a guest stayed out all night, breaking a major rule. The next morning, your community has to decide whether to hold her room or give it away. During this informal meeting, Jim is talking too much, not actually saying anything too useful, and repeating himself. There is no formal facilitator, so how could you respond? (What do you say?)
2. Money is short, and your community needs to raise some cash for house expenses. The community has discussed several options. Two good proposals are presented with no clear best answer: send an appeal letter to your entire mailing list, or send a more personal letter to people who've donated in the past year. As facilitator, how do you proceed? (What do you say?)
3. There was a fight between two soupline guests. In your meeting, the community needs to decide how to address the two men who fought. Because of his involvement in a recent guest altercation, your community member James is giving his opinion as the final word on the subject, using overly strong language, and is very upset and angry. As facilitator, what do you do? (What do you say?)
4. An employee group from Monsanto wants to come volunteer. The community needs to need to decide if it's acceptable for them to volunteer, and how you will host them. Other issues arise; people start talking about how they feel about Monsanto, the history of Monsanto, etc. How do you help guide the group through a decision? (What do you say?)
5. Two community members, Jesse and Kim, have a history of not getting along well. Jesse is presenting a proposal at this meeting. During clarifying questions, Kim puts out a question with a sharp tone, one that clearly has an edge to it. Jesse answers the question, you think with some discomfort. What's your response as facilitator?
6. Theresa was one of the initial community founders and tends to have a dominant role in group discussions. She is very experienced, but sometimes not sensitive to social and emotional dynamics. At this meeting, she has just made a proposal to the group, and people are having significant resistance to it. Your sense is that she's trying to push it through. Sam brings up a concern, and Theresa quickly responds, "Well I really don't think that's anything we have to worry about." What do you say next?
7. It is the middle of a difficult meeting. The group is running over time on an agenda item that seems close to resolution, but it hasn't come to agreement quite yet. Someone speaks about how frustrated they are by the process, and "couldn't this whole thing just get wrapped up already?" As facilitator, how do you respond?
8. At the beginning of the meeting during personal check-ins, a community member says that she just returned from a doctor appointment where she was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). What do you say next?

9. Jonathan makes a proposal at the meeting to build a bike shed near the main entrance to the house. Members list various concerns: “Will cars still be able to see well enough to turn in and out of the parking lot safely?” “Isn’t that where we were going to put native plants?” “I’m worried it’s going to be an eyesore. After people are finished, Jonathan says in a tone of obvious frustration: “Fine. I’m just gonna drop it. Forget I brought it up.” What do you say?
10. Several times, the community has committed to working on its vision statement, and somehow it keeps not happening. The topic was on this meeting’s agenda, but then during agenda review (at the start of the meeting) it is reported that the vision committee didn’t meet. You as facilitator propose putting the topic off again. Kasey, whose frustration at the group’s lack of progress has been mounting, says “I’m not willing to agree to anything else until we get this done.” What do you say?
11. You are discussing possible drug use by one of your guests, Alex. During conversation, community member Michael says, “I think Alex has been using, and I think our other guests Tracy and Lauren have too.” He goes on to describe Tracy and Lauren’s behavior. How do you proceed? (What do you say?)
12. A committee has just presented a plan on implementing some Green Revolution principles in your house. The committee did a lot of research and gathered a lot of input before making the proposal: to rehab the windows, turn the water heater down, and begin composting as a house. Most members at the meeting seem pleased with it. Dusty, however, starts bringing up a bunch of nitpicky concerns, and you can see the energy getting lower in the meeting as Dusty goes into more and more detail. How do you respond?
13. Nadia presents a proposal for starting a garden that isn’t well-researched enough. Pat responds with a comment about her lack of preparation that is funny and sarcastic—on target but perhaps a little hurtful. How do you respond?
14. The community has a member named Laura who many others find difficult to work with - she is very sensitive and has poor follow through because of her busy schedule. The community is discussing who will be on a fundraising committee, and Laura happens to not be at the meeting. Tom declines to serve on the fundraising team with Laura, and starts telling the story of a past difficulty they had working on a committee together. Jan interrupts and says, “I’m really uncomfortable with Laura being talked about behind her back.” What do you do next?